A young girl with dark hair is sitting on a dark-colored couch. She is wearing a dark jacket with a white and blue striped scarf. She is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is a large American flag, with the stars and stripes clearly visible. The entire image has a light blue tint.

Indicators of Children's Well-Being

Special Features

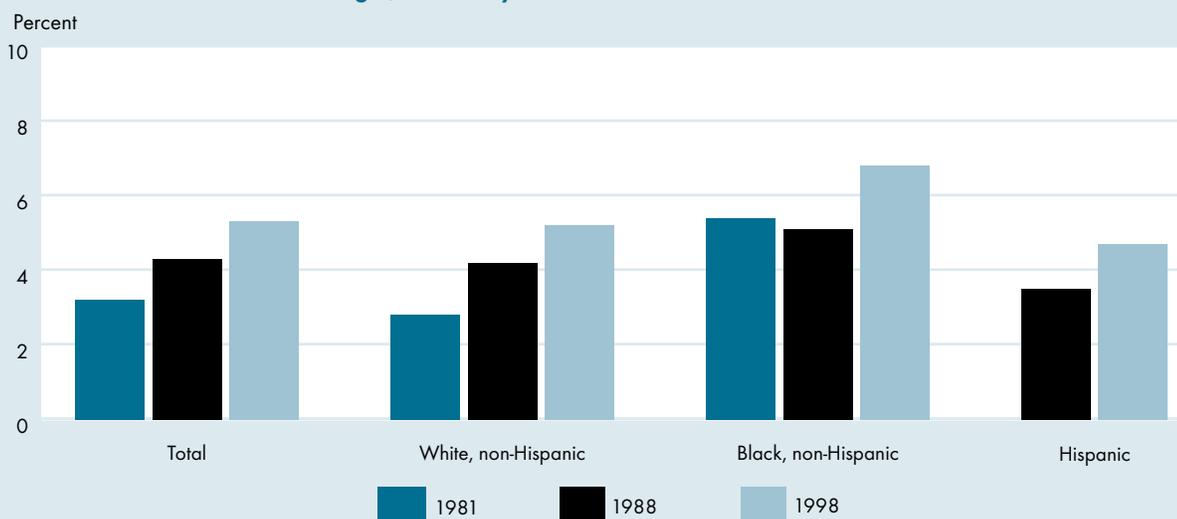
Following are two additional measures of child well-being that are not reported annually in *America's Children*.

Asthma

Asthma is the most common chronic childhood illness in the United States³⁶ and is a leading cause of childhood disability.^{72,73} Asthma causes limitations in childhood activities, missed school days, missed workdays for caretakers, and in some cases, premature death. Children with asthma use a disproportionate amount of health care services, including over two times as many emergency room visits and three and a half times as many hospitalizations as children without asthma.⁷⁴ The causes of asthma are not fully understood, but it may result from biological components and/or poor environmental conditions. Asthma has been increasing for the past several years, but reasons for the increase are unclear. Some possible explanations include changes in the diagnosis of asthma, variation in the outdoor environment and pollutants, changes in indoor air quality such as parental smoking or airtight homes, changes in access to preventive health care, changes in breastfeeding rates, or changes in socioeconomic status.⁷⁵

Indicator SPECIAL1

Percentage of children under age 18 who have asthma by race and Hispanic origin, selected years 1981-1998



NOTE: Data by Hispanic origin were not available in 1981; data for whites and blacks include Hispanics in 1981. For all 3 years, children were categorized as having asthma if the child ever had asthma (1981, 1988), or if they had ever been told by a health professional they had asthma (1998), and if the child had an asthma attack in the last year. Because of these slight differences, data for 1998 are not strictly comparable to previous years.

SOURCE: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Health Interview Survey.

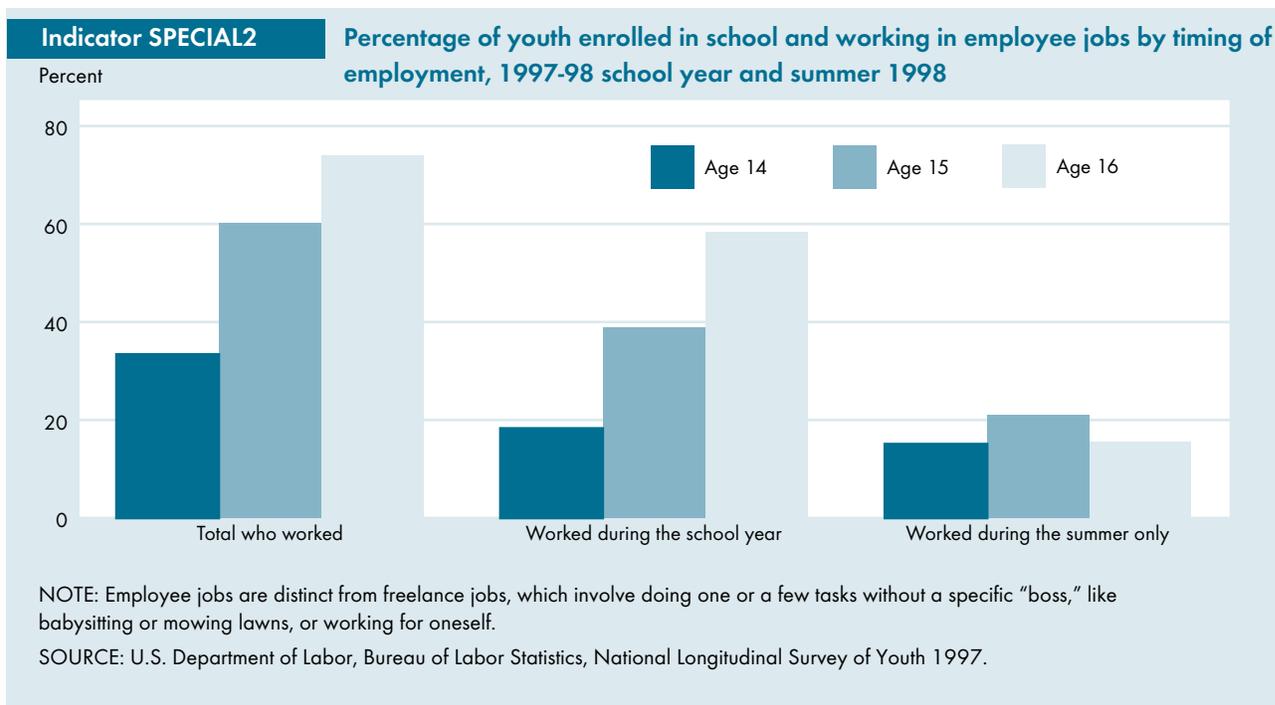
- In 1998, about 5 percent of children ages 0 to 17 had asthma. This was up from 3 percent in 1981 and 4 percent in 1988.
- Black, non-Hispanic children had higher rates of asthma than other racial or ethnic groups in 1998, at 7 percent. About 5 percent of both white, non-Hispanic and Hispanic children had asthma. Asthma rates have increased for children in each of these groups over time
- As children age, their rates of asthma increase. About 5 percent of children under 5 had asthma, compared with 6 percent of children ages 11 to 17 in 1998.

- Children living below the poverty line are more likely to have asthma than higher-income children. About 7 percent of children below the poverty line had asthma in 1998, compared with 5 percent of children at or above poverty.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table SPECIAL1 on page 112. Endnotes begin on page 58.

Youth Employment While In School

Whether young people should work during the school term has received considerable attention in recent years. Work experience can potentially provide positive benefits to young people. For example, it may enable them to learn about the world of work and about balancing different responsibilities. This knowledge can assist in their transition from school to work and into adulthood. A goal of the 1994 School-to-Work Opportunities Act is to strengthen the relationship between schooling and work. However, the employment of youth may, in fact, reduce their study time, increase school-absenteeism, and thus adversely affect their academic achievement.⁷⁶ As young people age, they are increasingly likely to work during the school year in an employee job, that is, a job in which they have an ongoing relationship with a particular employer, such as a restaurant or supermarket.



- Working while in school is prevalent among older high school students. Nearly 60 percent of students who were 16 years old when the 1997-98 school year began worked for an employer at some point during the academic year.
- Working during the academic year is common even among younger students. Eighteen percent of those who were age 14 at the beginning of the 1997-98 school year worked in an employee job at some point during the school year. For those who were age 15 at the beginning of the school year, 39 percent worked at an employee job.
- Even at these relatively young ages, youth enrolled in school begin forming strong, year-round attachments to the formal labor market. Forty-five percent of working youth age 14 worked both during the school year and the following summer, as did 58 percent of working youth age 15, and 70 percent of working youth age 16.
- Among youth age 14, males were much more likely than females to work at an employee job at some point during the school year. By age 16, however,

this gender differential disappeared. In addition, working males and females at this age were equally likely to work over 90 percent of school weeks.

- Among students age 14, 22 percent of white, non-Hispanics worked while school was in session, compared with 9 percent of black, non-Hispanics, and 13 percent of Hispanics. Among students age 16, 65 percent of white, non-Hispanics worked during the academic year compared with 45 percent of black, non-Hispanics, and 43 percent of Hispanics.
- As students age from 15 to 16, they are both more likely to work during the school year and to work a higher percentage of school weeks.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables SPECIAL 2.A and SPECIAL 2.B on pages 113-114. Endnotes begin on page 58.